The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed guidance for institutes of higher education (IHE) in the United States. Through collaboration and coordination with local health departments, IHE should disseminate information about the disease and its potential transmission to their students, staff, and faculty. IHE should prepare to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their students, staff, and faculty should local health officials identify such a need. The full text of this guidance can be found at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-ihe-response.html.

The following guidance summarizes CDC recommendations and may be used to assist in COVID-19 planning and response efforts for IHE's located in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Regularly and proactively communicate with your institutions to reduce stigma and misinformation; there is no connection between COVID-19 and race, ethnicity, or national origin.

The guidance below is structured in three sections: **prior** to COVID-19 detection in your community, **once** COVID-19 is detected in your community, and **after** COVID-19 event in your community.

« PRIOR to COVID-19 Detection in your community

- **Develop emergency operations plans that address the threat of infectious diseases such as influenza (flu) and COVID-19.**
  - Collaborate with your local health department, local government leadership, and state and local emergency planning organizations in the development and maintenance of emergency plans.
  - Ensure the emergency plan includes information on the following:
    - Guidance on disseminating health information messages to students, faculty, and staff (e.g. respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene guidance, ways to prevent the spread of illness, what to do when ill, etc.),
    - Strategies to communicate actions taken before, during, and after infectious disease outbreaks,
    - Plans to communicate changes in operating schedules or normal campus functions,
    - Best practices for communications with outside entities,
    - Strategies to prevent or reduce the spread of illness such as hand hygiene, environmental cleaning, social distancing,
    - How IHE and partner agencies will work together to prepare for and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, including delineation of roles and responsibilities,
    - Identification of routine and essential operations and tactics to maintain continuity of operations.
- **Encourage students, faculty, and staff to take daily preventive actions to remain healthy.**
  - Handwashing/respiratory etiquette.
    - Encourage frequent handwashing with soap and water or the use of hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
    - Promote hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette with health promotion materials.
  - Good eating/sleeping habits.

- Remind members of the campus community to get adequate rest and maintain healthy lifestyles (e.g. proper nutrition, exercise) to help ensure health.
- Access to preventive health information.
  - Provide health education resources via campus websites, social messaging, posters and print materials, and electronic signage.
- **Monitor illness activity and absenteeism.**
  - Engage human resources and administrative partners in review of sick leave/attendance policies and consider modifying policies to address leave/absence from class due to illness as a result of an infectious disease outbreak.
  - Establish baseline rates of absenteeism due to illness and typical rates of illness among students, faculty, and staff.
  - Alert the local health department when absenteeism or illness rates increase.
- **Maintain communications with partners.**
  - Establish routine communications with internal and external partners.
  - Keep internal and external partners informed of developments in regards to emergency planning and current operating status.
- **Establish procedures for managing ill students, faculty, and staff.**
  - Develop procedures for managing students, faculty, and staff who become ill while on campus to ensure isolation of those who are ill.
- **Prepare student health clinics.**
  - Ensure an adequate supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) and basic medical supplies.
  - Develop procedures for patient triage and isolation for suspected cases of infectious disease.
  - Establish plans and procedures with local health department and locality emergency management staff as well as local hospitals and clinics for managing students, faculty, and staff who develop illness as a result of infectious disease.
- **Perform environmental cleaning**
  - Ensure high touch surfaces such as doorknobs, computer keyboards/mice, phones, etc. are cleaned on a routine basis with appropriate cleaning/disinfecting agents.
  - Ensure adequate supply of soap and paper towels in public restrooms.
  - Provide disposable wipes to students, faculty, and staff may wipe down high touch surfaces before use and in between routine cleanings
  - Consider providing respiratory etiquette stations with tissues and hand sanitizer throughout campus facilities to encourage frequent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette

▶ ONCE COVID-19 IS DETECTED in the community (low to high severity)

Once COVID-19 is detected in a community, health department recommendations addressing any change in normal operations will depend on a number of factors such as the number of cases detected, the severity of illness associated with those cases and how widespread infection is or is predicted to be based on case histories. Assessing these and other factors will help the health department determine the severity of the situation, which will help inform recommendations. In consultation with local officials, colleges and universities should consider implementing the following when COVID-19 is detected in their or neighboring communities.

- **Determine if, when, and for how long to suspend classes and postpone or cancel events and activities.**
  - IHE leadership should consult with their local health departments when considering the decision to institute these measures.
  - The decision to suspend classes and cancel or postpone events and activities will be based on the number of cases of illness in the community, the geographic spread of the illnesses, and the severity of illnesses.

- **If a student, staff, or faculty member was on campus prior to being diagnosed as a confirmed case of COVID-19, consider the following:**
  - Temporary suspension of classes and postponement/cancellation of events or activities.
  - Communication of the exposure to the campus community.
  - Guidance to those exposed on self-monitoring and self-quarantine, if appropriate.
- **If classes are temporarily cancelled, consider the following:**
  - Cancellation of other events or large gatherings (e.g. club meetings, athletic events).
  - Communicate to students the importance of avoiding crowded gatherings (e.g. parties, gathering at malls, coffee shops, etc.).
  - Ensure continuity of education and research activities.
    - Utilize online or distance learning platforms (e.g. video chat) to conduct classes and meetings.
    - Consider information technology (IT) resource demands such as user helpdesk/troubleshooting needs, bandwidth and network capacity, etc.
    - Work to convert face-to-face classes into online classes and ensure the availability of learning resources (e.g. libraries, tutoring, study groups).
  - Ensure continuity of student housing.
    - Consult with the local health department when making decisions regarding student housing.
    - If no cases of COVID-19 have been identified in the campus community, students may remain in on-campus housing.
      - Ensure that students, in conjunction with residential life and housing staff, maintain situational awareness and practice preventive measures as outlined above to prevent the spread of illness.
    - If cases of COVID-19 have been identified in students residing in on-campus housing, consult with the local health department when making decisions about management of cases and contacts.
      - Ill students who do not require in-patient hospitalization may need to be moved to other housing facilities in order to facilitate isolation and self-monitoring for worsening symptoms.
      - Contacts of ill students may also need to be moved to other housing facilities to support self-quarantine and monitoring for the development of symptoms consistent with COVID-19.
      - [Enhance environmental cleaning](#) to reduce the risk of COVID-19.
      - Residential life and student housing support staff should be trained on best practices for prevention of COVID-19 in on-campus housing.
  - Ensure continuity of student dining services.
    - Consider ways to provide food to students when campus operations have been modified.
    - Adapt dining services to reduce large gatherings of students in cafeterias and dining halls and consider alternative means to provide meals such as delivery services or "grab and go" meal offerings.
    - Food services staff should be trained on best practices for prevention of COVID-19.
- **Take actions to reduce stigma surrounding those affected by COVID-19 and to ensure the mental health and well-being of students.**
  - Share facts about COVID-19 through pre-established, credible information channels to provide accurate information and reduce the spreading of false information and rumors.
  - Speak out against negative behaviors or messages aimed at those affected by COVID-19.
  - Ensure the continued availability of mental health support services for students, including counseling via phone or video chat and the use of national mental health hotlines.

⏩ AFTER a COVID-19 event in your community

Once concern about COVID-19 has subsided, colleges and universities are encouraged to work with local officials to help scale back prevention efforts specific to COVID-19. Recommendations to consider in this phase of response include:

- Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your company to discuss and note lessons learned.
- Maintain and expand your planning team.
- Participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.